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ABSTRACT

Following a preliminary discussion of school effectiveness, school-based management (SBM) elements, changing roles for school community members, and common implementation problems, this newsletter summarizes a research project testing one school district's readiness for implementing SBM. The project attempted to determine the knowledge, experience, and attitudes of principals and vice-principals in a large suburban school district in South Texas. The survey instrument was distributed through the superintendent's office to approximately 100 campus administrators in the district. Survey data were analyzed by education level (elementary, middle, or high school), position, and experience. Although there were no significant differences in knowledge scores among administrators, the data analysis disclosed three major areas of concern: (1) 90 percent of respondents felt that in SBM the principal is solely responsible for instructional leadership; (2) 85 percent felt that SBM's ultimate goal was to improve relations between central office and campus personnel; and (3) 47 percent felt that the primary role changes for SBM implementation were required of board members and central office personnel. Attitude results were mixed, but generally positive towards SBM. Recommendations concerning power delegation, time demands, and staff training needs are provided. (16 references) (MLH)

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SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT: ARE WE READY?

by Gladys J. Gibbs

Editor's Note: *The following is a summary of a study conducted by the author as part of the requirements of a practicum in applied research at the University of Texas in San Antonio. Dr. José A. Cárdenas, Visiting Professor in Educational Leadership supervised the study conducted during the Fall, 1990 semester.*

INTRODUCTION

Educators are continually faced with contradictory messages from the public. The public usually views the schools as inferior institutions and holds them responsible for a variety of social, economic and political problems. On the other hand, the public sees schools as the major institution for the dispersal of information in order to solve national problems - AIDS, drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, highway deaths - and much more.

Citizens have high expectations for their schools and feel that schools should be places where *all* children can learn. Many innovative techniques are constantly being tested. One innovation that has had impressive results, including improved teacher and student attitudes, improved test scores, a restored sense of professionalism among teachers and decreased vandalism, is school-based management (SBM).

State legislators pass laws and school officials administer them in all the school districts in the state. District school boards set goals and policies for the schools. But the actual teaching and learning takes place in the classrooms of each local school. The rationale of school-based management is to place more responsibility for making decisions at the campus level, close to where the teaching-learning interaction is located.

This research study will focus on the various aspects of school-based management and test a school district's readiness for its implementation.

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WHAT MAKES A SCHOOL EFFECTIVE?

The correlates of effective schools are closely related to the rationale of school-based management. "In their now classic review of the effective schools literature, Purkey and Smith (1983) drew attention to school-site management as one of the most important organizational-structural variables connected with effective schools" (*Radius*, 1988). As the research on SBM unfolds, it will become evident that this management system complements the effective schools correlates.

Effectiveness among schools, defined in terms of student performance on tests of basic skills, can be accounted for by the following five factors (Cohen, M., 1982):

- Strong administrative leadership by the school principal, especially in regard to instructional matters;
- Clear instructional focus with school-wide emphasis on basic skills instruction, in which there is agreement among the professional staff that instruction in the basic skills is the primary goal of the school;
- High expectations of student performance; principal and teachers believe that students can reach high levels of achievement regardless of pupil background;
- A school climate conducive to learning i.e. a safe and orderly school free from discipline and vandalism problems;
- A system of monitoring and assessing pupil performance which is tied to instructional objectives.

SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT

"In its purest form, school-based management is a remarkable, simple idea. It calls for each school to create its own council consisting of the principal, teachers, parents, and students, if appropriate. Other members of the community, such as neighboring business persons or local clergy, are sometimes included. The idea is to put

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more decision-making authority at the local school level, where the kids are, so that those who must implement decisions have a hand in making them" (Goldstein, 1989).

"SBM is different from past decentralization efforts because it changes the entire system of district and school organization and restructures most roles in the district" (David, Purkey and White, 1988). "The purpose is not to just reorganize administrative responsibilities, but to make changes in the traditional structure of authority, developing new relationships among teachers, administrators, parents and students" (White, 1989). The ultimate goal of SBM is to improve the learning and teaching environments for students.

ELEMENTS OF SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT

School-based management requires a reorientation in the way we think and operate in our schools and at the district level. The superintendent is the key to initiating and continuing SBM in a school or district. Without superintendent and school board support, and some budgetary flexibility, a context conducive to SBM does not exist. They must support the concept and be willing to share some of the decisions they would normally make. Their continued support is vital to the success of a SBM program in the district. "A district seeking full implementation of school-based management will decentralize authority to the greatest possible extent and provide broad discretion at the campus level. The state and district set broad goals and standards and provide resources, but the employment of resources and the path toward achievement are determined by school-site participants" (Muthler, 1989).

"The principal must be willing to share decisions with faculty or with parents. Failure in this willingness to share would block any SBM program initiated by the central office. Effective school research attributes success to strong instructional leadership by the principal. Successful schools need to create a collegial or shared work attitude, combined with a norm of continuous improvement.

"Studies of classroom management and decision making suggest overwhelmingly that teaching is fundamentally a process of making decisions in situations that are highly unpredictable and interactive" (Lortie, 1975). Teachers are decision makers. It is a natural step to involve the people that are affected by decisions into the decision making process. Research of both effective schools and SBM shows an increase in professionalism among teachers when they are allowed ownership in the process. Increased authority at the school site can improve morale, self-esteem and efficiency of school personnel.

"Several factors that show promise for success in implementing school-based improvement are: first, each superintendent must be deeply committed to improving instruction in the schools. Second, each district needs to have already been shifting some control to individual schools. In addition, funds for staff development in some districts need to be decentralized to support school-based improvement and inservice education. Finally, teachers and administrators need to recognize that (1) professional growth and inservice education are important components of any plan to increase effectiveness, and (2) school-based improvements require changes in roles, with accompanying professional development for all district personnel" (Caldwell and Wood, 1988).

The move to school-based management and school improvement requires changes in the roles of board members, the superintendent, central office administrators, principals, teachers and staff development personnel. The new roles are described on the next page.

Strategic planning is the vehicle that will help administrators journey into the future. The keys to successful strategic planning include (Herman, 1989):

- Involving stakeholders;
- Scanning for relevant data;
- Identifying critical success factors;
- Developing vision and mission statements;
- Doing an analysis of site manager's supports and constraints;
- Arriving at strategic goals and objectives;
- Developing action plans and allocating resources;
- Arriving at monitoring structures.

Training and staff development are crucial to the success of school-based management. Principals, teachers, parents and community members that are involved in the decision-making process must participate in a staff development program. The training is an

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Roles for School Board Members

Members of the board of education:

- establish and revise current policies to promote and support effective decision making and improvement of programs and practices in district schools;
- identify improvement goals to address major educational problems affecting the district;
- identify any improvement goals that all schools must address;
- establish a climate supportive of school-based improvement;
- establish performance expectations for central administration that support school-based improvement;
- monitor progress toward achieving the district's goals;
- allocate funds to support the achievement of the district's improvement goals;
- serve as public advocates for both the school improvement process and the effort to achieve the district's improvement goals.

Roles for Central Office Personnel

Central office administrators (the district management team):

- translate board policy and priority goals for improvement into short- and long- range district plans for implementation;
- provide data related to the district's major problems and goal areas identified by the board;
- provide and manage district resources to support school instructional improvement plans;
- approve and monitor school instructional improvement plans;
- evaluate all aspects of the district improvement operation;
- provide staff development to accomplish desired goals and objectives of approved school improvement plan;
- model, in all aspects of their operations, the behaviors expected of principals and their school-based improvement teams.

Roles for Principals

Principals:

- ensure the positive climate necessary for gaining commitment to school improvement decisions;
- involve their staff and those clientele served by the school in developing goals and program plans for improvement;
- ensure that staff development programs designed for their staffs are related to their school improvement goals;
- participate in staff development with their faculties;
- ensure that the design of the school improvement plan addresses the major educational problems in their schools;
- implement and re-evaluate school instructional improvement with their planning teams.

Roles for Teachers

Teachers:

- work collaboratively with the principal, central office staff, and representative parents (and in high schools, students) to consider district and school priorities and to select goals to achieve over the next four or five years;
- help identify the programs and practices necessary to achieve their school goals;
- assist in the implementation of these programs and practices by participating in staff development designed to help them achieve their goals;
- conduct inservice for their peers;
- help collect and interpret evaluation data related to their improvement goals;
- assist the principal in managing the resources to assure their improvement plans are successful.

Roles for Staff Development Personnel

Staff development personnel:

- assist principals and school faculties in developing improvement plans;
- collect and coordinate inservice needs from teachers, school planning teams, principals, and district-level administrators to support each school's improvement plan;
- work with principals to plan and manage inservice training for their school staffs related to assessed needs;
- work with central office administrators to plan and manage training for principals, district-level personnel, and the board;
- train district trainers and coaches to support staff development plans;
- assist in the evaluation of school-based inservice training
- design and deliver new teacher and principal staff development programs;
- identify and keep school faculties aware of trends, programs, and research related to student achievement (Wood *et al.* 1984).

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ongoing process that should continue throughout the program.

"Budget, curriculum, and staffing decisions are three areas of decision making most commonly decentralized under SBM. School-based budgeting allows the principal, teachers, and community representatives to allocate funds across a variety of categories according to the priorities of the campus. School personnel are better able to meet the needs of students by purchasing supplies and equipment necessary for students' specific needs.

"School-based curriculum development enables school staff to develop the instructional program, to select instructional materials and textbooks, and to design inservice training programs. Granting greater discretion over curriculum development and methods allows school staff to develop curricula most appropriate to the needs of their students.

"Participation in staffing decisions allows principals, teachers, and other school staff to determine the distribution of full-time and part-time positions, and the number of regular teacher, lead teacher, and teacher aide positions. Advocates of SBM argue that if school personnel are involved in making hiring decisions, they will select like-minded staff that reflect their own values, goals, and objectives" (White, 1989).

"Successful SBM takes parental encouragement a step further and involves the parents and community business leaders in the school decision-making process. Outreach is important. While the initial SBM council may consist of the principal, teachers and staff, this group then must design an effective plan for attracting parent participation" (Goldstein, 1989).

The 22nd Annual Gallup Poll addressed parental control of public schools. "The 1989 poll showed that more than 40% of the public believed that parents should have a greater say regarding the allocation of school funds, the content of the curriculum, the hiring of teachers and administrators, and the choice of textbooks and instructional materials" (Elam, 1990). These findings indicate the public is ready for SBM and willing to take part in its implementation.

SBM cannot be initiated overnight. "Districts with successful SBM programs refer to the gradual transition process" (White, 1989). Research states that it would take a year of planning, and then from three to five years to completely implement a school-based management program.

PROBLEMS IMPLEMENTING SBM

Although efforts to improve schooling through councils and empowerment at the building level are theoretically attractive and may help bring about position reform, they also are inherently problematic. Some of the problems and obstacles that researchers have identified are listed below (Levine and Eubanks, 1989).

1. Inadequate time, training, and technical assistance;
2. Difficulties in stimulating consideration and adaptation of inconvenient changes;
3. Unresolved issues involving administrative leadership on the one hand and enhanced power among other participants on the other;
4. Constraints on teacher participation in decision making;
5. Reluctance of administrators at all levels to give up traditional prerogatives; and
6. Restrictions imposed by school board, state and federal regulations and by contracts and agreements with teacher organizations.

IS TEXAS READY?

Since 1984 Texas public schools have been subjected to an onslaught of educational reform from the Texas Legislature and the State Board of Education. This attack began with an educational reform committee headed by H. Ross Perot, and led to the 1984 enactment of House Bill 72.

A district or campus that is considering the possibilities of developing a SBM program might be concerned that state control might be too great to allow such a system to exist effectively. A close look at the newest Texas reform laws, Senate Bill 1 (SB 1) enacted in 1990, might help alleviate these concerns.

In Texas, some aspects of curriculum are mandated in the form of essential elements which must be addressed. However, proponents of SBM are quick to point out that school-based management does not mean that federal and state guidelines on curriculum could be eliminated. SBM does not offer *carte blanche* to schools to teach whatever they want, however they want. It instead offers an opportunity to teach the

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mandated curriculum in a more original and locally-specified fashion.

SBM research also indicated that it is an advantage for individual campuses to choose textbooks and instructional materials appropriate to their needs. SB 1 provisions allow for a district or campus to be exempted from the state textbook selection requirements. Though not automatically exempted from state textbook regulations, the waiver procedure can allow the purchase with state money textbooks not on the state-adopted multiple list (SB 1, Art. IV, Sec.401, 11.272(f)).

SB 1 also created a Public Education Development Fund in order to support the implementation of innovative programs. Seventy percent of the money disbursed from this fund can be used for projects designed to achieve academic excellence for low performing students. This provision in SB 1 is indicative of Legislative confidence in local campus innovations (SB 1, Art. III, Sec. 3.03).

SBM research states the need for the school council team to have authority in staffing decisions. SB 1 also addresses this. It states, "Each principal shall approve all teacher and staff appointments for that principal's campus from a pool of applicants selected by the district ... based on criteria developed by the principal after informal consultation with faculty ..." (SB 1, Art III, Sec. 3.05, 13.352 (d)).

Another provision in SB 1 that supports SBM states that "...the principal of each school campus ... with the assistance of parents, community residents, and the professional staff of the school ... shall establish academic and other performance objectives ..." (SB 1, Art II, Sec. 2.16, 21.7532). A district or campus interested in the development of a school-based management program could work within the guidelines set down by the Texas Legislature and would find extensive support from the Texas State Board of Education.

SUMMARY

School-based management is not a fixed set of rules. It is the opposite. By definition it may operate differently from one district to the next and from one school to the next, and from one year to the next. Due to its high autonomy, school-based management is not for everyone. Even within a district it is not necessary, and it may be undesirable, for every school campus to participate.

There are three key elements that must be present for the successful implementation of site-based management: motivation, professionalism and leadership. It is the administrators, teachers and parents with these three traits that drive SBM. Since it places severe demands on the precious resource, time, restructuring needs to include sufficient planning time in the regular work week for site-based management to be implemented properly.

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The research that follows will attempt to determine the knowledge, experience, and attitudes of principals and vice-principals in a large suburban school district in South Texas. It is appropriate for a district this large to have its administrators participating as the research population group. There is a wide variety of socioeconomic groups among the student population. Districts that are large in size, with extensive student diversity can benefit the most from SBM.

By the develpoment and use of a survey instrument the investigator will determine the district administrators' level of knowledge and attitudes about school-based management. Responses from elementary and secondary principals will be compared for group differences. Comparisons will also be made on the basis of length of administrative experience. The analyses of the survey findings should determine if the administrators in the district have the basic knowledge, positive attitudes, and perceive the presence of central office support for the district to move towards the implementation of a school-based management system.

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Data collection

The survey instrument was distributed through the office of the district's deputy superintendent to approximately 100 campus administrators in the district. The deputy superintendent wrote a cover letter indicating the district's interest in the results. The respondents were given one week to return the survey form to the district office. Survey forms were received at the deputy superintendent's office in a sealed envelope and turned over to the investigator. A total of 88 completed surveys were collected at the end of the one-week period.

Data organization

Survey information was transferred to electronic scored answer sheets which were subsequently scored and analyzed by Mr. Charles Cavazos of the Research and Evaluation Department of the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA). The survey section measuring knowledge of site-based management (items 1-11) was analyzed for the following:

- Mean score;
- Range in scores; and
- Individual item analysis.

In the section determining the attitudes of the survey population (items 12-28), the data were analyzed for the following:

- Mean score; and
- Standard deviation.

Data were then analyzed by level (elementary, middle or high school), position (principal or vice-principal), and experience (0-5, 6-10, 11-15, or 16+years) of the respondents.

Data findings

Results of Section 1

The analysis of section 1 of the survey provided the following demographic information reflected in Figures 1, 2 and 3.

Figure 1
Administrative Levels
% of Administrators

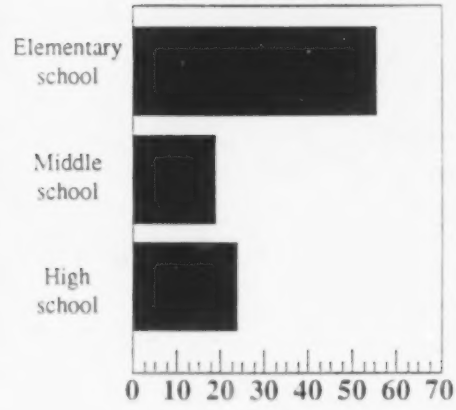


Figure 2
Administrative Positions
% of Administrators

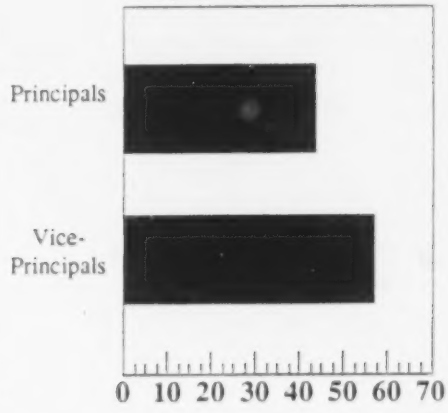
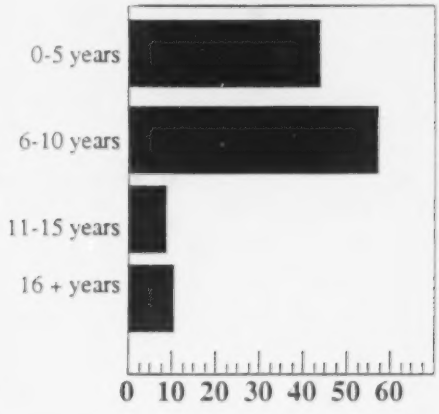


Figure 3
Administrative Experience
% of Administrators



Results of Section 2

Analysis of the survey section on knowledge about the subject indicated that the 11 items produced a mean test score of 8.65 correct with a standard deviation of 1.29. Individual administrators scored on a range of 7, with a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 11 correct. Results indicate a mean of 78% mastery of the knowledge tested. On the basis of this finding it can be concluded that the majority of the administrators have a working knowledge of school-based management.

There were no significant differences in scores among elementary, middle and high school administrators, nor were there significant differences between principals and vice-principals or among the levels of experience. An analysis of the 11 items on knowledge about site-based management included in the survey indicates three major areas of concern:

- Responsibility for instructional leadership (90% of the respondents felt that in SBM the principal is solely responsible for instructiona leadership).

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- The ultimate goal of school-based management (85% of the respondents felt that the goal was to nprove relations between central office and campus personnel).
- The role changes necessary for the implementation of SBM (47% of the respondents felt that the primary role changes are required of members of the board and central office personnel).

Results of Section 3

Analysis of data from the third section of the survey, attitudes of administrators toward SBM, produced the following findings concerning the implementation of school-based management:

- 70% of campus administrators in this district felt that increased autonomy at the campus level would be welcomed.
- 80% of the respondents felt that increased authority at the campus level would improve morale, self-esteem and efficiency of school personnel.
- Only about half (50%) felt that teachers would be willing to invest the time and energy necessary for the development of a SBM program.
- The administrators surveyed seemed to have faith in their teachers' ability to make decisions and solve problems.
- Campus administrators do not feel that at this time they have sufficient control over budgeting to implement SBM.
- A higher percentage felt that they had more control over curriculum development (52%) and staffing decisions (78%).

Restructuring with SBM requires a redistribution of power.

- 39% of the campus administrators felt that central office personnel would be reluctant to reduce their own power.
- 45% felt that campus administrators would be reluctant to empower other participants in SBM.
- 59% of the respondents felt that they would be more than willing than most to empower others.

All of the campus administrators surveyed (100%) realized the importance of commitment of the school oard and superintendent toward school-base management.

- Only 25% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the school board would be willing to back SBM in the district.
- Only 31% agreed or strongly agreed that the superintendent would back the implementation of SBM.
- Over 50% of the respondents indicated a neutral position on the two preceding statements.

In comparing scores of items 12 to 28 dealing with administrator attitudes, no significant differences were found among elementary, middle and high school administrators. All three levels felt that increased autonomy would be welcomed at the campus level.

Middle school administrators perceived more backing from the superintendent and school board than the elementary and high school administrators.

Elementary school administrators appeared more receptive to shifting more control to teachers, parents and community members. All three levels agreed that increasing authority at the campus level would improve morale, self-esteem and efficiency.

In comparing scores on items 12 to 28 dealing with attitude, no significant differences were identified among administrators with varying years of experience.

- Administrators with the longest levels of experience (11 to 15 years and 16+ years) felt that they had more control over the hiring of staff.
- Administrators with 16 or more years of experience had lower expectations for the shifting of control from the central office to the campus level, or at the campus level from the principal to the teachers, parents and community members.

The survey indicated the following perceptions of the district's current involvement in school-based management.

- One-third of the respondents felt that the district office was already shifting control to the schools.
- 57% felt that there was shifting of control at the campus level.
- 51% of the respondents felt that campuses already have committees for curriculum development.
- Only 10% indicated the existence of campus

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committees for staffing decisions.

- Only 26% indicated the existence of campus committees for budgeting decisions.
- 48% of the administrators surveyed indicated that they were definitely interested in receiving training in SBM.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The majority of the administrators in the research district have a working knowledge of school-based management. These campus administrators have a positive attitude about the benefits of SBM. The majority feel that they have a staff that would benefit and be willing to invest the time and energy in SBM. There is a need for a visible show of commitment to SBM on the part of the school board and superintendent. Central office administrators have to be willing to delegate power to the campus level. Campus administrators have to be willing to delegate power to teachers, parents and community members. Not all administrators indicate a willingness to empower others.

Those campuses that have innovative administrators, staffs that are willing to delegate powers, and go through SBM training would probably benefit from the immediate implementation of SBM. Since SBM can be implemented one school at a time, it is possible to begin the implementation on those campuses that already have innovative and willing administrators, and school staffs that are willing to delegate powers and participate in SBM training.

Research studies indicate that those attempts to implement SBM that have failed, have done so due to the tremendous demands on teachers' and administrators' time, and lack of staff training. It would be advantageous for the district to address the need for sufficient time during the work week for those involved in the implementation of SBM. It is an energy and time-consuming management method; and it will require many hours of staff training and other meetings for proper implementation.

It is recommended that a staff development program in the fundamentals of school-based management be made available to the school board, central office administrators and campus administrators. If there is sufficient support among these groups then campus administrators interested in implementation of SBM need to provide fundamental training to school staff, parents and community participants. Following campus training, it is desirable to survey campus personnel to determine interest in participation.

Campus and central office administrators, teachers, parents and all others that will be involved in the transitional process should then receive intensive training in the various aspects of school based management implementation.◊

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